

TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION
SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021



TENNESSEE HIGHLIGHT

Austin Peay's Campus Becomes a Certified Arboretum

For more than a decade, Austin Peay State University (APSU) has made sustainability a priority across their campus. In 2008, the school implemented a Sustainable Campus Fee where every student pays \$10 each semester that is dedicated towards the campus' sustainability efforts. Since then, APSU has been able to implement various programs that demonstrate their commitment to help protect the environment and conserve resources.



However, one environmentally friendly campus project has been in development for almost a century. Since the late 1920's, APSU has understood the benefits of planting native species of plants and trees on their campus. Wes Powell, Assistant Director of Landscaping explains "Native species are proven to require significantly less resources to maintain because they are already adapted to our climate, soils, pests, and diseases. More importantly, they play a vital role in our ecosystem by providing food and habitat for thousands of insects, birds, and mammals." With the campus being located in an urban setting, its trees provide a green and safe refuge in the midst of a sea of concrete and asphalt.

In 2015, APSU was recognized by the Arbor Day Foundation as a [Tree Campus USA](#). It has received the award every year since and is one of only ten higher education institutions in Tennessee to achieve that status. Since Wes was hired in 2014, the school has added 55 new species bringing the total number of species on campus to 167. Nearly 70% of the 167 species are native to North America and 90% of those are native to Tennessee.

APSU's continued hard work and dedication to this urban forest was rewarded last fall when their campus was officially certified as a Level 3 Arboretum by the [Tennessee Urban Forestry Council](#). The arboretum provides the opportunity to learn about different species of trees and study how they grow and mature. And what better place for such an educational tool than a university campus. Please visit Austin Peay's Sustainability [website](#) to learn more about their arboretum and other sustainability efforts.

If you would like your institution's sustainability efforts highlighted in our newsletter, please email us at TDEC.TNHESI@tn.gov

NATIONAL PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

The Food Recovery Network is the largest student-led movement to fight food waste and end hunger in America. It all started at the University of Maryland when four students noticed so much food being thrown in the trash every evening in the dining hall. The students decided to recover these meals and at the end of the year, had delivered over 30,000 meals to hunger-fighting nonprofits. Their work made a scalable model that was difficult for campus administrators to refuse, and easy for other college students around the world to say yes to.



Today, the program is on 140 campuses in 46 states and has recovered and donated over 4.9 million pounds of food which is the equivalent of more than 4.1 million meals to individuals and families in need.

Several higher education institutions in Tennessee have already either previously been or are currently involved with this program. If you are interested in starting a chapter on your campus, visit <https://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org/>.

TN HIGHER EDUCATION SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

TDEC's Office of Policy and Sustainable Practices (OPSP) serves as the primary contact to provide technical and developmental assistance and support for enhancing sustainability efforts at colleges and universities across the state through the TN Higher Education Sustainability Initiative. Our programs include:

TN CUPP

The Tennessee College/Underserved Community Partnership Program (TN CUPP), modeled after EPA's CUPP, works to establish partnerships between underserved communities and Tennessee Higher Education Institutions (TN HEIs) in Tennessee. Through these partnerships, TN HEIs can provide a variety of low to no-cost technical support and manpower to address environmental, economic, and health issues that impact the quality of life in nearby underserved communities. Communities benefit from innovative and no-cost technical assistance provided by students attending nearby academic institutions. Professors and students benefit by gaining hands-on experience in their areas of study, with students earning college credit and building their resumes; and professors gaining recognition for their department and university.

CAMPUS FOOD PANTRY GRANT

More students than ever before are facing food insecurity which can lead to lower grades and a greater risk for dropout, especially within institutions located in distressed counties and/or food desert areas. TDEC is doing its part to combat both student food insecurity and food waste by offering a Campus Food Pantry Grant opportunity to assist schools with establishing campus food pantries. To be eligible to receive this grant, a portion of the food that the food pantry receives must come from rescued sources (those sources of food that would have otherwise gone to waste) to demonstrate that the food pantry is diverting food from the waste stream.

The grant application period is currently open until **April 1, 2021**.

If you are interested in learning more about these programs and how your school can participate, please visit our [TN HESI website](#) or email Brook Powell at brook.powell@tn.gov.

CUPP PROJECT PROFILE

University Partnership Helps Feed Community

A group of students from Bamberg-Erhardt High School in South Carolina participated in the Emerging Scholars Program at nearby Clemson University. The program engages with schools that have historically had lower ACT and SAT scores, leading to less students being able to further their education. Under the guidance of David Vaughn, Faculty Advisor of Clemson University's Engineers for Developing Countries (CEDC), students were challenged to identify a community issue. They identified their Bamberg community as a food desert since it had been without a grocery store for three years, after the BI-LO grocery store closed. Access to fresh food is often perceived as an issue associated with under-developed countries. However, more than 2.3 million people in American households, live more than 10 miles away from a grocery store and lack access to fresh, affordable food.



A team was formed to teach the Bamberg-Erhardt High School students how to form a project to address this issue. The goal was to mentor and help the students solve their food desert problem effectively and sustainably. The team researched food deserts in the United States and abroad, including what they are and how other organizations have addressed them. The team visited Bamberg-Erhardt to gain a deeper understanding of the issue from the students' perspective. This engagement helped them to build and maintain relationships with the school and its students. After engaging with several people regarding the issue of food deserts, the team was alerted that a grocery company, Piggly Wiggly, had decided to build a store in Bamberg. Piggly Wiggly is now open and operating in Bamberg. Attention has since shifted to preventing food deserts through grocery store interventions. The team plans to engage with the grocery store and others to ensure that Bamberg does not become a food desert again.

The EPA's CUPP program has engaged with over 90 academic institutions since its inception in 2013. CUPP has facilitated over 120 partnership projects with more than 70 communities and academic institutions. As of January 2021, the value of services provided to underserved communities is over \$45,000,000.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Each year, the Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards (GESA) honor outstanding accomplishments that support the protection and enhancement of Tennessee's natural resources. Nominating an individual, group, or organization for their achievements is a meaningful way to promote conservation and recognize effective environmental leadership in Tennessee.

Nominations are currently being accepted for the 2021 awards. Higher Education Institutions are often nominated for their efforts to promote sustainability and environmental protection on their campuses or in their communities. If your school completed a project during 2020, please consider completing a nomination form to let us know the great work you are doing.

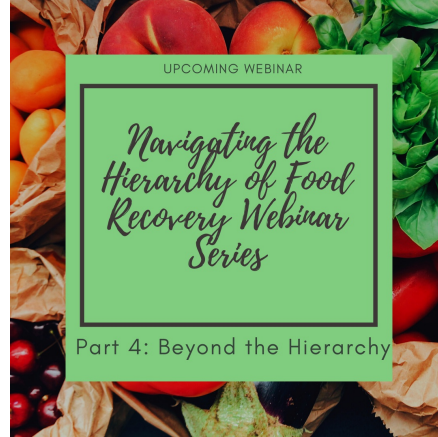
The deadline for nominations is **April 1, 2021**. Award recipients will be announced in June 2021.

To learn more about the awards and the nomination process, please visit the GESA [website](#) or email Kathy.Glapa@tn.gov.



The Zero Waste TN program is designed to help inform Tennesseans on how to make better choices and rethink the way we manage waste. TDEC and its partners encourage Tennesseans to focus on reducing their waste by being aware of where it comes from and where it is going, and to make responsible decisions along the way.

The Zero Waste TN Program consists of:



Date: March 11, 2021

Time: 1-2:30 pm CST

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation – Office of Policy and Sustainable Practices (OPSP) invites you to join us for the fourth and final webinar in our webinar series "Navigating the Hierarchy of Food Recovery". This series has featured webinars focused on the different management strategies established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Food Recovery Hierarchy. You can find our first three webinars in the series on our [YouTube account](#).

Our fourth webinar will be focused on policy, technology, and other innovative strategies for addressing food waste. Speakers will include the [Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic](#), [ReFED](#), and [OPSP](#) discussing the current state of food waste programs in Tennessee and where we can go from here.

[Register Here!](#)



GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON
SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

OCTOBER 12-14, 2021

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE's) virtual Global Conference on Sustainability in Higher Education is the largest stage to exchange effective models, policies,

1. Zero Waste Day - October 27th, an awareness day to take the "Zero Waste Challenge"
2. A guide to Understanding Zero Waste – including the need for change, key principles, and numerous benefits
3. Consumer Guide to Zero Waste - a detailed guide for Tennesseans to help incorporate waste-reducing practices into their every-day lives

TDEC is looking to expand the Zero Waste TN Program to include Zero Waste Partners across the state, including manufacturers, businesses, institutions, and organizations, that take the initiative to consciously reduce their waste. These partners will be highlighted as Zero Waste Partners and featured on the Zero Waste TN webpage as an informative and beneficial resource for Tennesseans to use.

By adopting and promoting zero waste principles, we can greatly reduce our impact on Tennessee's environment, preserve our natural resources for future generations, and reduce the growing costs associated with the collection and disposal of our solid waste. Join us in this growing movement and help promote positive change in Tennessee.

If you are interested in becoming a Zero Waste Partner, or learning more information, please reach out to Kelsey Davis at Kelsey.Davis@tn.gov or (731)610-9049. You can visit the [Zero Waste TN website](#) to learn more.

research, collaborations and transformative actions that advance sustainability in higher education and surrounding communities.

The Global Conference on Sustainability in Higher Education will deliver the same inspiring content, engaging networking opportunities, and thought-provoking keynote speakers and presenters celebrated each year in person – now virtually produced with the opportunity for an even larger global audience of innovative professionals committed to a more sustainable future.

The failure of many entities to respond effectively to a deadly pandemic, coming at a time when society is already reeling from intensifying climate-related disasters, ongoing systemic racism and rising authoritarianism, has resulted in profound apprehension about the future. With a theme of "The future is ...", this year's Global Conference on Sustainability in Higher Education reflects the uncertainty about the future that many feel and invites participants to recommit themselves to the urgent work of building a future that is sustainable, equitable, and resilient. The conference will highlight inspiring examples of higher education leadership that empower participants to envision and create such a future.

Visit AASHE's [website](#) to learn more about the upcoming conference and how you can register.

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation
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Tennessee Higher Education Sustainability Initiative

Visit our [website](#) to sign up for the Higher Education Sustainability Network